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ABSTRACT

This report outlines preliminary results of research analysis concerning one of 15 interrelated topics studied at an experimental "school without walls" to gain an understanding of the processes and outcomes involved in an attempt to establish an alternative social institution. The report is divided into four sections. Section 1 presents a chronology of the major events in Metro's attempt to involve students in decision-making. Section 2 presents generalizations about the dynamics of this process based on a preliminary analysis of the data. Section 3 presents some examples of each of the specific types of data collected, focusing on the approach to involvement in decision-making taken by various subgroups in the student body. Section 4 outlines some ways in which the results of the completed research program can be used in the development and evaluation of future alternative schools. The final section includes a discussion of implications of the Metro research on student involvement in decision-making for the development of other alternative schools. (Author/MLF)

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STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING IN AN ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL: A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Center for New Schools
59 East Van Buren Street
Suite 1800
Chicago, Illinois 60605

$1.85

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ERIC

This preliminary analysis and presentation of research data concerning the development of Metro High School in Chicago was prepared to illustrate the nature of this research program. We are currently seeking funds to complete data analysis and preparation of training materials based on this research. The nature of the research, steps required to complete it, and potential uses of the results are described in more detail in A Proposal for Completion of Research on the Development of an Alternative School. The collection of research data has been supported by the two grants from the Urban Education Research Fund, University of Illinois at Chicago Circle. The analysis of student involvement in decision-making in this report is based substantially on the work of Stephen H. Wilson, a member of the research team who is currently completing a doctoral thesis on this subject at the University of Chicago.

We hope that this preliminary report will also be useful to those who are involved in altemative schools.

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Introduction

This report outlines preliminary results of research analysis concerning one of fifteen interrelated topics that have been studied intensively at Metro High School, an experimental "school without walls" operating within the Chicago Public School system. Its purpose is to provide a specific example of data and the initial results in this research program. The overall purpose of the research program is to gain a detailed understanding of the processes and outcomes involved in an attempt to establish an alternative social institution.[1] The fifteen interrelated areas under study are the following:

1. Development of the school's goals: origins, modification of goals in practice, outcomes related to goals.

2. Cognitive outcomes of the program after 1 1/2 years and their relationships to process. Basic skills, skills for independent learning, knowledge of the city, vocational knowledge.

3. Affective outcomes and their relationship to process: image of self, sense of control, interpersonal relationships.

4. Successful classroom practices: structure of classes, strategies for promoting independent learning, student-teacher negotiations, integration of skills in learning units.

5. Changes in teacher role in the developing institution: integration of responsibilities for counseling, teaching, curriculum planning, development of outside courses, decision-making.

6. Internal staff cooperation: staff's development of procedures for decision-making and implementation, cooperative teaching, mutual support.

[1] A description of the Metro program is contained in The Metro School: A Report on Chicago's Experimental School Without Walls. A description of the research design and methods is contained in A Proposal for Completion of Research on the Development of an Alternative School.

7. Approaches to counseling: a teacher as group leader in counseling groups, counseling students with personal problems, counseling students for responsibility within the Metro program.

8. Student-teacher relationships: varieties of learning relationships, relationships outside classes.

9. Student involvement in institutional decision-making: influences of student and staff attitudes and skills, institutional constraints.

10. Students' involvement in personal academic decisions: selection of course of study, involvement in policy decisions within courses, choice of individual projects.

11. Use of community resources for learning: varieties of resource use, characteristics of effective learning experiences, school-community conflicts.

12. Communications within the institution: formal and informal communication patterns, breakdowns in communications.

13. Administrative support and procedures: leadership patterns, nature and effects of administrative procedures.

14. Dynamics of intergroup relations: race and class relations, patterns of friendship cliques.

15. Relationship with the school system: origins of the innovation, problems, strategies for dealing with bureaucracy.

In studying these topics in the developing experimental school, we have attempted to combine quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a full picture of the phenomena under study. For any given area of study, information is available from most or all of the following sources:

1. Paper and pencil questionnaires and achievement tests administered at the beginning of the program and at regular intervals. All 350 Metro students and a control group of 100 students who applied to Metro but were not admitted in the random selection process were tested.

2. In-depth interviews administered to a stratified random sample of 48 Metro and control students at the beginning of the program and after 1 1/2 years of operation (Referred to as the subsample.).

3. Observations and informal interviews focusing on the subsample students in all major formal and informal contexts in the Metro program.

   Extensive participant observation and informal interviews focusing on issues and contexts within the program rather than particular individuals. Includes critical events in the school's development.

4. Short structured interviews (mini-interviews) with random samples of students stratified by sex and race. Conducted periodically and especially during periods of controversy within the school.

5. A nearly complete file of documents that have been produced in the school to this point, including meeting reports and agendas, position papers, notices, correspondence, etc.

Our attempt has been to use each approach to its best advantage to document processes and outcomes of the program in the areas being studied. Quantified data from questionnaires and interviews provides a framework which is given texture and specific reality by extensive participant observation and informal interviewing. A more complete outline of the research program appears in A Proposal for Completion of Research on the Development of an Alternative School.

Of the fifteen topics under study, research concerning student involvement in institutional decision-making has been chosen for presentation. This material was selected since an analysis of a portion of the data on this topic has already been completed in a doctoral dissertation by Stephen H. Wilson, University of Chicago, who is a member of the research team (Participant Observation Field Study of an Experimental High School).

The following report is divided into four sections. Section I presents a chronology of the major events in Metro's attempt to involve students in decision-making. Section II presents important generalizations about the dynamics of this process that can be

made on the basis of a preliminary analysis of the research data. Section III presents some examples of each of the specific types of data collected; the data presented focuses on an important aspect of student involvement in institutional decision-making the approach to involvement in decision-making taken by various subgroups in the student body. Section IV outlines some ways in which the results of the completed research program can be used in the development and evaluation of future alternative schools. This final part includes a discussion of implications of the Metro research on student involvement in decision-making for the development of other alternative schools.

This preliminary report is designed to serve several purposes. First, since we are currently seeking funding to complete the analysis of this data, this report should provide a specific example of the type of information and products that will result from the research program. Second, since many operating or planned alternative schools have placed emphasis on student involvement in institutional decision-making, the close analysis of its dynamics at Metro High School and discussion of some of its implications may be of assistance to other alternative schools. Third, since many people are searching for new methods for the evaluation of educational programs, this report might provide them with ideas for useful approaches.

It should be emphasized that this initial report is based on preliminary inspection of part of the data collected and can provide only a general "feeling" for the scope and specificity of the completed project.

1. A Chronology of Major Events

Metro High School initiators began the school with many assumptions about student participation in decision-making commonly made in the alternative schools that have been started within the last few years. They felt that alienation and disruption within conventional secondary schools resulted to a large extent from the lack of student involvement in shaping decisions that affected students' lives. They felt that one basis for an effective learning program would be to lift most of the restrictive rules that generally govern students' daily behavior (dress code, hall passes, etc.), to allow students to select their own courses within broad distributional requirements, to involve students in the evaluation and planning of individual courses, and to involve students in making and implementing policies that would affect the entire community. It is this last aspect of decision-making--involvement in decision-making at the institutional level--that is the focus of this report.

Staff assumed that students would come forward eagerly to participate in institutional decision-making when this opportunity was offered them. Further, they didn't want to prescribe the form that such involvement would take, but hoped that the students themselves could develop an appropriate form for their involvement. Below is a list of the major steps that took place in the evolution of this initial idea:

First Semester, Spring 1970: Students generally felt that no government was best, but that if some form of government was needed, the only valid form of government was one based on direct representation. Therefore, a weekly all-school meeting was initiated and was supposed to function as the major decision-making body within the school. The all-school meeting was effective in a few crisis situations, but it

proved unwieldy for making ordinary decisions. Attendance at the meetings fell off by the middle of the first semester, and in the absence of clearcut decisions by these meetings, staff meetings and staff committees became the main arena for decision-making. The staff had been meeting almost daily since the school opened, trying to cope with the many problems of the new institution, and had established committees dealing with specific areas in which decisions had to be made (evaluation, curriculum, etc.).

Several faculty members were upset with the gravitation of decision-making to the staff. After the all-school meeting failed, students (encouraged by these staff members) formed a representative student government with two members from each counseling group (similar to a homeroom). However, this organization met only once and quickly faded from existence. The most successfully sustained student involvement came in a structured staff-student selection committee for new staff members, in which requirements for participation were clearly specified.

Summer, 1970: In a staff-student planning workshop for the next year, 16 students were selected at random to participate and paid for their participation.

Fall, 1970: The first part of the fall semester was characterized by confusion resulting from the fact that Metro's permanent headquarters wasn't finished and the program had to occupy inadequate temporary headquarters. The staff meetings and the staff committees again functioned as the major decision-making unit. These meetings were open to students, and staff made periodic attempts to involve students in this work. However, few became involved.

Near the end of the semester, a group of staff and students began to meet to try to develop a new model for an effective staff-student governing body. Under this

plan, an "administrative board" was to become the central school governing body. The board was to be composed of representatives from "like groups" formed by both staff and students. A "like group" was any group of five people who felt they had common interests they wanted to see represented. Each like group that wished to form could have representation on the administrative board. This approach to governance was designed to overcome two problems of earlier attempts at government organization. First, the basic unit to be represented was to be a group of people with common interests rather than a diverse group. Second, formation of like groups was voluntary; individuals who wanted to could be permanently represented on the administrative board. Other individuals could choose to ignore the board or could come forward only to influence particular decisions in which they were specifically interested.

Over a period of several weeks, like groups were selected, a chairman elected, and procedures established for the administrative board. The board functioned for about six weeks and then quietly expired. Its demise resulted from three factors: student involvement in the administrative board was generally limited to the small group of students who had been active in past government schemes; it had been hoped by the board's initiators that it could incorporate the already functioning staff committee system and coordinate its work with the principal, but this attempt was not effective; the board was overly concerned about the dangers of centralization of power and the result was a lack of organization.

Third Semester, Spring 1971: The demise of the administrative board once again left the staff meeting and its associated committees as the major arena for decision-making

and implementation. By this time, the staff had become fairly effective in working through issues, making clear decisions, and fixing responsibility for carrying them out. Formal student involvement at this point was slight. Some students attended staff meetings and worked on committees. In crisis situations, students discussed issues at all-school meetings and turned out in somewhat larger numbers to work within the staff decision-making apparatus.

Fourth Semester, Fall 1971: Students became angry over two administrative decisions that were made without consulting them. A group of new students is providing leadership for another attempt to form an organized group that will represent student interests in decision-making.

This brief chronology will provide a few benchmarks for the analysis of the dynamics of student participation in decision-making in the next section.

II. The Dynamics of Student Involvement: A Preliminary Analysis[2]

The important influences on the development of student involvement at Metro can be organized under six major headings: Student's Initial Approach to Involvement, Staff's Initial Approach to Involvement, Characteristics of the Metro Program, Characteristics of the School System and the City, Staff and Student Approaches in the Developing Program, and Variations in Approach Among Student Subgroups. The generalizations that seem appropriate on the basis of preliminary analysis of the data are underlined throughout the text.[2] Along with some of the generalizations, comments from students and staff are presented. They are not intended to "prove" the accuracy of the generalizations, but merely to illustrate the specific nature of the general statement.

Student's Initial Approach to Involvement

Although we will not attempt to review other research and theory in this outline, one distinction made by Etzioni[3] is extremely useful in understanding the students' initial orientations toward decision-making. Etzioni hypothesizes that organizations develop two major realms of activity: the "instrumental" realm, which is related to the official functions of the organization, and the "expressive" realm, which is related to people's personal concerns. In the school context, "instrumental" activities deal mainly with the operation of the instructional program, while "expressive"

[2]This analysis is based primarily on participant observations and interviews. The attempt to justify each conclusion by relating it to data analysis is beyond the scope of this report.

[3]Amitia Etzioni, "Organizational Control Structure." In James March, ed., Handbook of Organizations. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965.

activities center around friendships, dating, athletics, informal "rapping," etc. In many organizations, two different structures evolve to deal with these two realms, with the expressive realm having leaders, values, and styles of action that may be at odds with the organization of the instrumental realm. In the traditional school context, it is often the expressive realm in which the adolescent invests most of his energy, and it is leadership in expressive activities that determines prestige with other students. In strictly controlled high schools organized along traditional lines, administration and teachers often attempt to exert strict controls over not only the instrumental realm, but also the expressive realm. Traditional school rules touching the expressive realm regulate such areas as dress, social interaction, movement, eating, and smoking. To defend their autonomy in the expressive realm, students have created separate expressive subcultures, and recently have directly challenged the school's right to regulate their expressive activity.

Coming from traditional school, the major concern of Metro students was to gain autonomy in the expressive realm. Metro staff strongly encouraged this direction, and they considered freedom of movement, dress, expression, association, etc. fundamental to the program's design from the beginning. Thus, in the areas that students cared most about, there was no need for participation in decision-making to gain desired ends. The battle had already been won. At the end of the first semester of operation, all students were asked what they liked most about Metro as compared with their old school. The characteristic of the program cited most often was freedom in the expressive realm: freedom to talk to friends, get up and leave if you were restless, wear what you wanted, eat when you wanted, etc.

The characteristic cited second most often in this same series of interviews was the closer student-teacher relationship at Metro. The staff's willingness to grant freedom in the expressive realm established a degree of trust between teachers and students. The staff's attempt to establish a warmer more personal teacher-student relationship solidified this trust. Staff members were sensitive to student concerns, and by the end of the first semester many students felt comfortable in openly criticizing those aspects of the program they wanted changed. This freedom to criticize was extremely important to students; students generally saw their most desirable role in decision-making not in terms of developing detailed programs and implementing them, but in terms of bringing problems to the attention of the staff, who would then have the responsibility to develop solutions.

> Student: The way you got to do it is to make decisions. Then if we don't like it, we'll let you know. You do something and we'll react. Students don't dig sitting in meetings and stuff. You feel like teachers are talking about stuff and you don't have any idea what it means.

The major concerns of students with regard to school policies might be described as follows:

1. To obtain as wide a field as possible for expressive activity.
2. To be able to complain to the staff about instrumental activities they disliked.
3. To establish the right to opt out of instrumental activity if they wished.

To a large extent the first objective was achieved. In the few areas of expressive activity where freedom was not allowed (e.g. students were not allowed to smoke in the school headquarters because of a Board of Education rule), there was constant minor friction with the staff. The second objective was also achieved almost completely;

almost all teachers were open to student complaints and effectively communicated this willingness to listen to students, even though they did not always solve the problems posed. Many students initially felt that the third objective had also been achieved because of the staff's stated emphasis on freedom in the program. Subsequent efforts by the staff to tighten up the attendance policy have been a subject of continuous controversy in the program.

With their major objectives largely achieved, Metro students saw little reason to become actively involved in a formal decision-making process. Staff members argued that students should carve out some formal decision-making role for themselves since the staff might not always act in the students' best interest. This argument, however, was extremely abstract, and most students were influenced much more by present reality. They saw little need to expend energy in a decision-making process when things were already going their way.

A major factor in students' reluctance to create a formal decision-making structure was their strong aversion to many of the structures that were suggested. This aversion stemmed from their past negative experience with governmental mechanisms and from a set of values that conflicted with the representative decision-making mechanism proposed.

One of the most powerful deterrents to the development of a formal mechanism for student participation in government was the students' strongly negative experiences with student governments in their old schools. In their past experience, such governments had had limited power, been manipulated by teachers and administrators, made and enforced restrictive rules rather than protected student interests, and been com-

posed of students from higher status homes.

Student: The student council was just puppets for the teachers. They pulled the strings and the student council did what they wanted.

Student: There was one clique that got involved. No one else paid any attention.

Staff and those students pushing student government were never successful in communicating an alternative image of what a government could be to the majority of the students.

Student: All government is is some guy going around telling you what to do. There are people here nobody is going to force them to do anything.

Student: If we have a student government, they'll start making rules and pretty soon we'll end up like the old schools.

Observer: Why don't you guys get together in some kind of student government and see what you can do about it. (the lack of gym equipment)
Student: A student government couldn't do that shit.

Especially in the Metro situation where students felt things were going well, many students cited local and national governmental structures with which they were dissatisfied in arguing against a government at Metro. Politically active "youth culture" students cited the war policies of the national government. Many black students cited the actions of the police at a local level. In both instances, the form of the argument was the same: you're copying the kind of government that we already know doesn't work right.

Many students had brought still another attitude from their previous socialization that worked against becoming involved in Metro: the notion that the individual is powerless in acting against larger forces in the society. Even in the face of sincere attempts to get them involved by staff, some student maintained that involvement

was pointless. Further, when they did get involved, a small setback confirmed their belief that "you can't fight the system." Finally, a role in actively planning and carrying out decisions was completely foreign to their previous experience; the most many hoped for was a chance to complain. Staff attempts to get students beyond the complaining mode were largely unsuccessful.

Closely related to their distrust of governmental structures, school-wide policies, etc. was a personal ethic that is summarized in two current cliches: "do your own thing" and "hang loose." One of the strongest trends in our interviews and observations reflected student willingness to act on these concepts.

The ideal form of government for Metro, many students believed, was none at all. There would be no government, no rules; only "people dealing with people."

> Student: We're going to have a beautiful anarchy. Everybody's going to do their own thing and leave everybody else alone. We decided we don't need a government.

Following from this theory, if there had to be some form of government, it could only involve direct representation. Most students felt that a person could only speak for himself, not for other people.

> Student: No one can represent me. I'm the only person who knows what I'm thinking and no one else can present my views.

The reluctance to represent other people was related somewhat to the extreme diversity of the Metro population; however, some students felt that they couldn't even represent their best friends. Every individual is unique, and no one has a right to make a rule that might restrict his freedom.

This denial of the concept of representative government, linked in part to students' negative experiences with student governments in their old schools, called into

question the motives of those students who wished to form a representative government. Thus, students who privately admitted that they were extremely interested in participating in a student government were reluctant to come forward for fear of being branded as power-hungry by their peers.

> Teacher: Let's elect a representative. Any nominations.....No nominations? I guess we'll have to ask who's willing to be ours.
> Student: (feigning great reluctance) I guess if no one wants it, I'll volunteer.

The "hang loose" ethic was also in strong conflict with the notion of a governmental structure. It glorified reacting to the feeling of the moment, and coping with each situation as it arose. It opposed planning, rules, and long meetings. It led students to accept whatever happened with equanimity. If no one showed up for a scheduled meeting, "We'll just have it another time." If the person who was supposed to buy pop for a picnic came without it, the explanation "I just couldn't get it together" satisfied many people.

Further contributing to the reluctance of students to become involved in formal decision-making was the nature of the staff meetings in which many decisions were made. Many staff meetings were long, characterized by extended rhetorical exchanges, and conducted using procedures with which most students were unfamiliar. Much time was expended discussing details of implementation that students felt were trivial. Attendance at a few staff meetings confirmed the belief that the best way to influence decisions was to talk informally with teachers and let them fight it out.

> Student: I'm not going to spend all those hours working on that stuff. Those teachers are here til 6 every day. They're paid to do it.
>
> Student: I shouldn't have to worry about that. I'm getting credit for being a student, not for being a teacher.

The process of decision-making came in dead last in terms of enjoyment compared with the opportunities to "mess around," "rap," "play ball," etc. that were available at the same time.

> Student: No, can't. (come to meeting) Me and Karen are going to mess around downtown today.

Staff's Initial Approach to Involvement

As it became clear that the all-school meeting was an inadequate arena for decision-making and as the problems of inventing an entirely new institution mounted, the staff increasingly felt that the survival of the institution depended primarily on their ability to make decisions and carry them out. Student involvement in institutional decision-making, which for many staff members had been a top priority initially, became secondary to finding solutions to pressing problems.

Given this context, many characteristics of the staff, some of which have already been touched on, lessened the liklihood of formal participation by students in institutional decision-making:

1. Staff members had a close relationship with students, were willing to listen to students' gripes about the program, and were often sensitive in reacting to and even anticipating students' needs.

2. The staff felt ultimately responsible for the success of the program; they felt that if it failed, its demise would be perceived as their responsibility, not the students.

3. Strangely, the excellence and creativity of the staff worked against student involvement. Tentative student ideas were often pale in comparison to well-worked out teachers' ideas that grew out of long experience and analysis.

4. However much a staff member was consciously committed to student involvement, his past life experience as a teacher and as a student himself had cast students in a submissive role. Especially when harried and overworked, staff tended to revert to old role definitions.

5. Some staff members were ambivalent about the desirability of student involvement in decision-making and unsure of its limits. This ambivalence was communicated (often in subtle ways) by the actions of the staff in the decision-making process.

6. Teachers had superior skills in the process of bureaucratic decision-making compared with students'. This competence acted as a constant pressure (of which participants were generally not aware) that consolidated the staff role in decision-making vis-a-vis the students.

7. Even when students were present in staff meetings, staff shaped the event. They were always there, and they knew past history of which students were unaware.

> Teacher: Do you know what's going on?
> Student: No, I wasn't here when you discussed it last week.
> Teacher: See, that's one of our biggest problems. We'll never get anything done if it always goes on like this.

Their tendency to assume leadership was complemented by the hesitancy of students to exert leadership and risk being characterized as power-hungry by their fellows.

8. The staff itself encountered formidable problems in becoming an effective body for making and carrying out decisions. They had had limited experience in working in this capacity in previous teaching assignments. They had the following types of difficulties: personality clashes sometimes obscured issues; an initial rejection of

procedural rules allowed discussions to wander aimlessly; those present at meetings were often unclear as to when a decision had been reached; those absent were not always informed about decisions; responsibility was often not clearly assigned for carrying out a decision. In the case of decisions requiring widespread cooperation of students and staff, staff was hesitant to confront individuals who violated agreements. A detailed consideration of these issues is in itself a major topic of our research. It has direct implications for student involvement, however: staff members facing formidable problems of dealing with each other in decision-making often could not cope sensitively with the added issue of student involvement.

This list might give the misleading impression that the staff knowingly throttled student involvement. Quite the opposite was the case. Most spent considerable time listening to student complaints and trying to deal with them, agonizing over the lack of student involvement and trying to correct it. Had the students exhibited a strong desire for involvement, staff characteristics that worked against student involvement would have probably been a minor influence. As it happened, however, they meshed with the prevailing student approach to involvement in such a way as to minimize its chances of occurring further.

Characteristics of the Metro Program

It is of course impossible to neatly separate characteristics of the program from characteristics of the students and staff mentioned above. Yet it is useful at least for initial explication to discuss several characteristics of the developing Metro program that tended to work against student participation in institutional decision-making.

Metro was testing a number of new educational ideas that were deemed equally important by staff members to the idea of involving students in decision-making. To some extent, these ideas conflicted with the goal of student involvement. The school without walls concept dispersed students throughout the city and made meetings and communications difficult. The multi-racial and multi-class student body made it hard for the students to speak with one voice on any issue. The attractiveness of the curriculum offerings (e.g. filmmaking, improvisational theater, internships in political organizations) competed for the student's time with decision-making, as did the constantly available opportunities for expressive activity. The school's commitment to try certain curricular innovations (interdisciplinary curricula, use of the city as a learning resource) sometimes limited the field for decision-making.

> Student: We told them we didn't like that core course idea and that it just wouldn't work, but it went in one ear and right out the other.

A second area of difficulty was communication within the school. Communications regarding the time and place of meetings, their agendas, and the status of various decisions were often ineffective at Metro. Sometimes meetings were advertised only through informal channels. Sometimes only staff received notification. In the developing institution, so many signs, notices, etc. were constantly bombarding students that much information was lost, or people tuned out these overloaded communication channels completely. Contributing to this problem was the generally poor graphic quality of many communications (e.g. blurred dittoes, tiny hand-written signs, or bulletin boards with several hundred nondescript notices). This communication problem discouraged the participation of all but the most committed and undercut the legitimacy

of decisions that were made without most people's knowledge.

Student: Who made that decision? I never heard about those meetings; are you sure they told people about them?

As in any institution, many of the discussions and work related to decision-making went on informally. This tendency was accentuated at Metro by the organizational confusion of the new institution and the emphasis on informality that pervaded the school. This informal process inadvertantly excluded students from many important discussions relevant to various decisions. Even though teachers and students had close relationships, teachers tended to eat and relax together. Even formal meetings were often called quickly in response to a crisis or impending deadline. Again, informal channels of communication came into play and shaped the group who turned out.

Announcements of meetings were often not fully understood even when students heard or saw the message. This difficulty was related to many students' limited concept of the influence they could have in shaping decisions they were concerned about. They wouldn't relate a concern they had to an announced meeting with the expectation that they would get something done about their concern by attending. The tendency to receive and comprehend communications was highly variable between student subgroups, as will be discussed extensively later.

Another major program characteristic that affected student involvement was unequal accesses to program resources that might be used to participate in decision-making (e.g. typewriters, xerox, tape-recorders, stencils, sometimes meeting space). This limitation stemmed from several sources. First, there had been no system for checking out materials when Metro opened, and much equipment was stolen. In

response to this problem, a check-out system was instituted that depended on obtaining a teacher's permission. Second, some staff members (especially clerk-typists) acted on the assumptions of the traditional school where students had no access to materials. Third, there was a shortage of equipment and materials due to delays in the ordering process within the Board of Education bureaucracy; teachers took precedence over students in using scarce resources.

A student who understood the way things worked and had good staff connections could get just about whatever he needed. But there was no pool of resources set aside for students. Some students took these difficulties as a general indicator of staff insincerity about their involvement or became discouraged in specific attempts to participate in decision-making (e.g. in trying to put out a proposed meeting agenda).

Characteristics of the School System and the City

Metro did not develop in a vacuum. It had to deal constantly with a school bureaucracy whose reaction to the school generally ranged between indifference and open hostility. Neither the school bureaucracy nor the city at large shared Metro's commitment to developing a new vision of the capacities of adolescents.

Key members of the central administrative staff of the Board of Education were consistently opposed to student involvement in decision-making. Their disparagement of Metro's attempts at student involvement was often communicated to the student body. Often as these stories circulated, it became unclear whether the disparaging statements were made by central administrative staff or Metro staff.

> Principal to Staff: I showed the plan for an administrative board to the district Superintendent. She couldn't stop laughing. Teachers and students have equal votes. She showed it all around the office.

The implementation of Metro decisions was often blocked or delayed by the Board bureaucracy. Some students who participated in decision-making did not understand the enervating process of working through and around the bureaucracy and interpreted the delays as resulting from the Metro staff's insincerity. Other students came to understand the process, but became discouraged that anything could be accomplished when it was necessary to fight this giant bureaucracy.

The nature of the "school without walls" put students in constant contact with an outside world that gives limited rights to young people (including elevator operators, policemen, transit collectors, store and office building guards). Metro often took the student's part in these encounters (e.g. protesting to the transit authority about collectors who wouldn't accept students' fare cards). However, the school had limited success in many instances. Again, delay and failure discouraged students from participating in decision-making.

A final aspect of the functioning of the larger society that affected Metro was the compulsory nature of schooling. Since students were compelled to stay in school until sixteen by law and many were under parental pressure to finish high school, some students viewed Metro as the best of a set of limited options. They would ideally have preferred not to attend any school at all, so they had limited interest in shaping Metro beyond protecting their expressive activities and their right to opt out of undesirable instrumental activities.

Student: You'll let us decorate our zoo, but you won't let us out.

Student: The only reason I stay is cause my mama says I better. She didn't finish, and she wants me to. She said she'd tan my ass if I quit.

Staff and Student Approaches in the Developing Program

The main factors that influenced the history of student involvement in institutional decision-making at Metro were largely fixed (or became apparent) in the first semester and have already been described. The subsequent actions of faculty and staff can be seem largely to flow from these initial attitudes and actions. One general pattern of subsequent development was the increasing efficiency of the staff meeting and its committees as a means for making decisions and carrying them out. The staff meeting/committee structure evolved at a time when the first naive hopes for student involvement were dashed, and many pressing problems confronted the school. It grew up with very little awareness of its overall nature on the part of students.

Student: I didn't like the way registration worked.
Teacher: You ought to get to work on the curriculum committee.
Student: What's that?
Student: What do you mean curriculum committee?

Some students did attend staff meetings, and individual committees met some success in involving students in their work. However, many students did not know that these meetings were open to students; and as attempts to turn students out for meetings failed, less and less effort was invested in communicating times and agendas of meetings to the school at large.

Student: What's that over there?
Teacher: It's a staff meeting.
Student: Can we go hear what they're talking about?
Teacher: Sure, they're open meetings. Didn't you know that?

Observer: How's the committee coming? Have any students come to meetings?
Teacher: I gave up on them. Last year, I put up signs and signs and no one showed. I guess they're not interested.

Students who did attend staff or committee meetings often felt like outsiders. The staff as a whole and specific committees developed a way of working together and a large amount of shared knowledge that few students possessed.

> Teacher: You know, we've been through five evaluations now. Our committee is just beginning to feel like we know what's happening. It doesn't make much sense to start all over again. Students are welcome to come help though.

The student who decided to come to a meeting of the staff or the curriculum committee would confront a group of people who shared a lot of experience in dealing with the issue at hand, controlled the meeting, often felt harried and anxious to make progress, sometimes sent out ambiguous signals regarding their interest in student involvement, and were often reluctant to "fill people in" about what had transpired in the past. The articulate forceful student could overcome these dynamics since (it must be re-emphasized) most staff members still talked constantly to students about issues in the school and were anxious for student input. However, the underlying dynamics of formal meetings quickly convinced the average studen that he was essentially a visitor in these meetings.

The solidification of the staff meeting/committee system undercut the chances for survival of the proposal to involve students through the administrative board. In the view of some staff members, those who started the ad board were perpetuating the same weaknesses that were embodied in the all-school meeting and student council approaches. Rotating chairmen, uncertain meeting times, changing representatives, reminded them of earlier decision-making vacuums into which the staff had had to move. Further, some staff members who had done considerable work through the

committee system on such topics as evaluation and curriculum were reluctant to throw their lot in with the ad board.

> Teacher: The way I understand it the ad board is just supposed to recommend things. I don't see the use of the curriculum committee and all the work we've done if it's still got to be voted on.

A second major pattern in the later development of the decision-making process at Metro was the shift in concern from decision-making to decision-implementation. The staff became very efficient at implementing the type of decision that required the work of a few people (for example, developing a format for registration). They had much greater difficulty in implementing decisions that required widespread cooperation of staff and students (for example, a prohibition on noisy activities in the conference areas). Staff members were initially extremely reluctant to set up clear limits for behavior and act as "policemen" in enforcing them. Staff members had basic disagreements (which they did not start to clarify until well into the second semester of operation) concerning what the limits of behavior should be and what a staff member's responsibility was in enforcing them.

The issue of enforcing limits within the school raised particular problems for students. Staff had hoped that the entire community of staff and students would enforce agreed upon "understandings." Students did feel a measure of responsibility to deal with students who were clearly out of line, particularly when their action might result in bad publicity for the school. However, students were extremely reluctant to confront their fellows, since it ran counter to the notion that everyone should be free to do his own thing.

Student: We'd get together in these meetings and make all kinds of resolutions. Like keeping the TV low or talking to people who were cutting. When it got down to really saying something to someone, no one could do it. It just wasn't done.

The diversity of students in the school made this problem even more severe. If students were asked how a decision should be carried out, they often responded that "everyone will take care of himself."

Student: Who's going to do it. (Put out notes on the results of a meeting).
Student: You know, whoever feels like it will do it.

Even in the face of considerable evidence that self-regulation was not working (for example, in a period when extensive thievery of girl's purses was going on in the headquarters), student preferred to suffer the consequences rather than institute rules and procedures.

Student: I got some stuff "ripped off" from my locker. It's something you just live with. You don't bring stuff and leave it around. You don't want cops walking around here, do you?

Further, those students who did attempt to enforce community understandings (for example, about keeping the noise down in certain study areas) were often ignored or belittled by their fellows.

Student: I'm really depressed today. Two times I tried to talk to people who were messing up. Once there were two kids chasing each other around a room. I asked them to stop, and one asked me, "What gives you the authority to tell me to stop?" Another time there was a guy bouncing a ball against a wall, messing it up. I asked him to stop. His friend asked where was my badge. Then he said, "Yeah, you a policeman or something?" He kept on bouncing the ball. Then he said, "Make me stop."

Even during the early period when important decisions were being made in all-school meetings, many students were not aware of what these decisions were. Further

the belief that every man must represent himself led to the argument that if you weren't at the meeting you weren't bound by the decision.

> Student: Who decided it was going to be done that way?
> Teacher: There was a student meeting yesterday afternoon.
> Student: I wasn't there and I can name ten other guys who weren't. Now, you know they're not going to go along with that.

As decision-making became centered in the staff meeting/committee system, many students became even less aware of decisions that had been made, and saw them more as externally imposed rules.

> Student: This place is getting worse. They're beginning to push us around and make rules.

It should be emphasized again that most students were enthusiastic about the school and generally satisfied with its operation. An independent evaluation team from the University of Michigan who spent a week at the school during its third semester of operation confirmed this observation. However, observations and interviews in the third semester revealed that the system in which students communicated informally with staff and staff dominated the formal decision-making had some serious shortcomings. First, in a situation where staff were extremely overworked, they could deal only with a portion of the complaints advanced by students. Some students repeatedly advanced problems that were not dealt with. These students began to doubt the sincerity of staff. They were also somewhat intolerant of the difficulties staff encountered in trying to solve problems. As long as they remained in the complaint mode, they didn't face the complexities of finding solutions to problems. Indeed some students had initially developed an unrealistic estimate of the staff's ability to resolve issues and were particularly bitter when this resolution did not occur.

In sorting through the many problems that students complained about, staff priorities did not always agree with those of students. As described earlier, students placed a high priority on issues touching their expressive concerns (for example, the right to smoke, the right to paint your locker); however, some staff members regarded these issues as trivial. Further, the staff tended to select those issues for resolution that they deemed most important in the light of their own values. Thus they more effectively served the needs of students with value orientations and backgrounds similar to theirs.

Variations in Approach Among Student Subgroups

Metro probably has one of the most diverse student bodies of any high school in the United States. It was selected randomly from a cross-section of applicants representative of the student population of the city as a whole in terms of race, ethnic group, social class, measured ability, interests, and previous success in school. Since the outcomes of education in traditional schools have been closely related to the background characteristics of students, and since Metro sought to eliminate or at least lessen these disparities, variations among subgroups in every aspect of the Metro program were scrutinized closely. Originally, the focus of research was on racial and social class subgroups within the school. However, observational analysis was used to develop some classifications for students that were based more directly on students' attitudes, actions, and patterns of association within the Metro program. These groupings were related closely to the student's life style and attitudes toward schooling when he entered Metro:

Black Youth Culture (BYC): A small group. They identify strongly with black culture and politics in an ideological fashion. They tend to be bright but with uneven records of past school achievement. Mainly middle class background.

White Youth Culture (WYC): These students, mostly middle and upper middle class, identify with the semi-hippie image propounded by the media. They tend to be bright, express radical political views, and to be strongly interested in the "counter-culture." They may have recently failed in school because they were "fed up with it," but their past school records include periods of high achievement, and they are generally above grade level in basic skills.

White School Oriented (WSO): These students tend to be from middle class and lower middle class backgrounds. They deal with school to some extent in mobility terms for job opportunities and college. They tend to be conscientious in their school work, to have consistent records of achievement ranging from slightly above average to superior and to have skill mastery in the same range. Note that they were tuned to traditional schools, where the expectations teachers had of them were much different than at Metro.

Black School Oriented (BSO): Largely the same backgrounds and previous histories as WSO, with some identification with black culture.

Black School Alienated (BSA): These students tend to be from lower class backgrounds, often in inner city areas and large housing projects. Their previous school experiences have been characterized by academic failure and conflict with the school. They identify strongly with black students from similar backgrounds.

White School Alienated (WSA): Somewhat similar class background and experience in school to BSA. Many identify themselves as "greasers."

It should be emphasized that some students can't be clearly classified in any of these groups. It should also be emphasized that labels for the groups reflect their orientation when they came to Metro. Over two-thirds of the School Alienated students have become highly involved in the program; most School Oriented students who were used to slavishly obeying the teacher developed more independent styles of learning; and so forth. Changes in students from different subgroups is a separate topic of investigation.

However, even students who underwent dramatic changes in some respects continued to identify with and employ life styles characteristic of their original subgroup in the school and to interact most with students from their own subgroup.

The existence of these subgroups had a number of effects on student involvement in institutional decision-making. As mentioned earlier, diversity undercut the notion that any student could speak for a significant number of his fellows. Further, when a nucleus of students formed around an issue, they generally represented one subgroup in the school (e.g. the White School Oriented group interested in obtaining more college prep courses). Such subgroups were often criticized for and expressed self-doubts about not being representative of the school, but they found it difficult to interest students outside their subgroup in their issue.

> White Student: This meeting is ridiculous. You're obviously not representative. Just look around and there aren't any black students here.
>
> Teacher: I liked what your activity group planned, but you know what you got to do now--you got to let all kinds of students know about it or you won't get any support.

In the heterogeneous student body, informal information about decision-making (meeting times, hot issues, etc.) was generally shared within subgroups rather than between subgroups.

By the second semester of operation, each subgroup had developed a fairly comprehensive view about what Metro was like, how it "really" worked, and what styles of action were appropriate for subgroup members. Each had a definite view about student involvement in decision-making which it reinforced among its members and into which it socialized new students. The existence of this socialization process

strongly influenced the chances that students from particular subgroups would become involved.

It is beyond the scope of this brief analysis to clarify the responses of all subgroups within the school to the attempt to involve them in institutional decision-making. A brief treatment of two groups, however, the White Youth Culture and Black School Alienated groups, will give some understanding of variations in approach to school governance among the different student subgroups.

Almost every student who became involved in decision-making on a sustained basis came from the White Youth Culture group.

> Teacher: How come its always the same kids who show up for anything. I haven't seen more than about eight different kids at these meetings.

They shared the class background and life style of the majority of the faculty. They were tuned to the same political issues as many faculty members and shared the same ideas about the need for freedom in education and for the radical alteration of conventional schooling. In a school characterized by close contacts with staff, they were likely to have the closest contacts. Since they were politically oriented, they generally agreed with the argument that students had to get organized to protect their interests. They had high reading skills and were the best tuned to informal and formal communication about decision-making within the school. Since their views about education tended to coincide with those of the staff and since they exhibited more interest and skills in decision-making than other students, they were the most likely to see their concerns acted upon by the staff. Sometimes they created the impression (usually unconsciously) that their views represented the views of the

entire student body. For example, most of the staff, along with the White Youth Culture students, felt that traditional school activities and symbols (dances, class rings, school colors, cheerleaders, etc.) were corny and unnecessary. This convergence of values between the staff and the most salient student group masked strong interest among the School Oriented and School Alienated groups in bringing some of these conventional school activities and trappings to Metro.

BSO Female: You know we can't carry on if we don't get some support for the cheerleaders. If an English teacher was asking for supplies, you can be sure there'd be some action.

The School Alienated groups (black and white) were the least effective in decision-making. The generalizations below can be applied with minor variations to both the white and black groups. The generalizations below are based specifically on the data concerning the Black School Alienated group. Many influences in their previous background decreased the liklihood of their participating in the formal decision-making process. In their previous schools, Black School Alienated students had generally seen themselves as being at war with teachers and administrators. They had kept their expressive life "underground," rigidly separated from the instructional program. They had almost no past experience with the rhetorical and procedural rituals of formal decision-making. They had generally low reading skills and had largely turned off the traditional school's communication channels. The School Alienated group had a wealth of experiences that taught them they were pawns of fate. What leverage one obtained in influencing one's destiny was largely a result of individual resourcefulness in seizing on momentary opportunities, not the result of establishing a framework of rules within which to operate.

Many students in this group changed markedly when they came to Metro. Over two-thirds became meaningfully involved in the Metro program. They appreciated the friendliness of teachers and the absence of constant harassment. They identified with the school and wanted to insure its survival.

SA Female to two SA Males who are smoking: Hey, what are you doing, you fool? You want the Board to come down and shut this place down?

With most teachers, they were outwardly affable but still extremely protective of their real concerns. With a few teachers, they formed close relationships, and through these teachers their views about the program were presented in formal meetings.

BSA Male: I can trust the one's I'm tight with. I can tell them anything.

Yet their approach to the formal decision-making process was much more decisively influenced by their past experiences than by their experience at Metro. They retained their distrust of working with authority and put most of their energy into a largely separate expressive subculture. They attended few formal meetings, were often silent when they did attend, and often left meetings as they dragged on. They were not reached by the school's communication system. (When staff expressed concern about students who didn't respond to communications, their increased attempts at communication generally reached those student in the Youth Culture and School Oriented groups who were already attuned to what was happening.)

BSA Male: Nobody ever looks at signs. They're always bullshit.

A counselor announced to the counseling group that there would be a meeting after school to try to discover why people were cutting. Half the counseling group members were cutting and didn't hear the announcement.

The orientation of Youth Culture students to avoid over-centralization in decision-

making resulted in disorganization (changed meetings, unclear agendas, etc.) that further discouraged participation from the School Alienated group.

Consistent with their orientation toward externally-administered punishment, many recommended harsh actions (e.g. expulsion) carried out by the principal when asked how a particular problem should be solved. They expressed this view in spite of the fact that some of their number would have been likely targets of this sort of action.

As leaders became identified within this group, attempts were made to get them involved in formal decision-making. These students usually listened politely but indicated by their later actions that they preferred to retain their separate status in the expressive subculture in such areas as dating and sports rather than become involved in governance. This approach was interpreted by one teacher as follows:

> You know, he's a real leader out on the football field. During the student-faculty game he really had those students working together. He's a real fuck-off around here. He never does anything.

The students in this group liked many aspects of the school and had definite viewpoints about how it could be improved. Since they lacked the skills and disposition to work through the staff meeting/committee system, however, they were often perceived as being uninterested in decision-making by some staff members and Youth Culture students or, alternatively, not deserving of representation if they didn't turn out. The notion that people who really care about an issue will show up for a meeting has a strong middle class bias to it. School alienated students were more likely to express dissatisfaction through socially disapproved forms (such as petty vandalism) rather than signing petitions or attending meetings.

The Black School Alienated group devoted considerable skill and energy to initiating several traditional expressive activities at Metro: interscholastic sports, dances, cheerleading. As suggested above, their interest in these activities ran counter to the majority of the staff and the highly salient White Youth Culture students. They worked with a few responsive black staff members on these projects. In these attempts they encountered two types of obstacles that undercut their faith in the school. First, they felt the Metro staff didn't give priority to their concerns, and in a number of cases this perception seemed accurate. Second, they were especially discouraged by the bureaucratic delays encountered in dealing with the central Board of Education staff, which confirmed their original beliefs about the futility of working with "the system."

This brief analysis should give a preliminary idea about the potency of a student's subgroup identification in shaping his approcah to institutional decision-making.

III. Some Illustrations of Available Research Data: Subgroup Participation in Student Government

The generalizations made in Section II are based largely on observation and informal interviewing (and a resulting doctoral thesis) by one of two participant observers who worked on the research team. To illustrate the full range of information available for analysis, some examples of questions asked and data collected using each of the five major research techniques listed in the Introduction are presented below. The presentation of this data should indicate how multiple research techniques can complement and cross-check one another. The material selected for presentation bears on a topic treated in the previous section: subgroup differences in approach to participation in institutional decision-making.

It should be emphasized that the presentation of much of this data is based on preliminary inspection, not formal analysis. We merely want to give people a "feel" for the data available. Questionnaire information will be subjected to quantitative analysis using the Test Score and Statistical Analysis, Version Two (TSSA2) and multivariate analysis of variance (MESA 98) programs developed by the University of Chicago. Structured interviews will be content-analyzed.[4] Qualitative data (participant observations, informal interviews, and documents) will be analyzed using procedures for qualitative analysis generally accepted in this field.[5]

[4] Based on approaches suggested by B. Berelson, Content Analysis in Communication Research. New York: Free Press, 1952.

[5] Based primarily on methods suggested by S. Bruyn, The Human Perspective in Sociology. Engelwood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1966 and W. Scott, "Field Methods in the Study of Organizations," in J. March, ed. Handbook of Organizations, Chicago, 1965.

1. Attitude Questionnaire administered to all Metro students and their controls at the beginning of the program and after one and a half years of operation: The questionnaire contains a school climate inventory that has subscales devoted to students' sense that they can participate in and influence decisions within the school and a subscale dealing with teacher-student relationships (which proved an important mediator of involvement). For each statement, the student is asked to indicate "Exactly Like My School," "A Little Like My School," "Not Much Like My School," and "Not at All Like My School." Here is a sampling of the pertinent statements:

--Teachers and students often laugh at things together.

--Teachers are genuinely concerned about students' feelings.

--Outside of class, most teachers are friendly and find time to chat with students.

--There are a few groups that sort of run the school. If you aren't in one of them, it can be pretty rough.

--If a student really believes something, but most other students don't, he'd better not talk about it.

--Students don't hesitate to speak up to teachers when they think something is wrong in the school, and teachers do something about it.

--Most teachers feel students are too young to make decisions about the way the school is run.

--The principal is willing to hear students' complaints.

--The student council has a lot of power to decide things that are important.

The responses of Metro students on this subscale can be compared to their earlier responses referring to their previous schools and to the responses of the control group. Within the Metro population, differences between subgroups (Youth Culture, School

Oriented, etc.) can be compared. In addition, the questionnaire includes detailed information on students' social background that can be used to subdivide students in various ways in looking for differential responses to the school climate questions.

2. Subsample Interviews with 32 Metro students and 16 Control students:

The in-depth interviews administered to the subsamples when Metro began and again one and a half years later provide further detailed information pertinent to students' attitudes toward and role in decision-making.

--Do you think high school students should have any say about what happens in school? PROBE: IF YES, how much? About what kinds of things? IF NO: Why not?

--What is the worst thing about going to Metro? If you were the principal how would you change that?

--Say you were making a film about Metro. What kinds of things would you put in it to show what it's really like?

--Who is your favorite teacher at Metro? Tell me something about him (her). Give me an example of something he (she) did that you really liked. What is it about a teacher that makes you really respect him?

--In general, how much say or influence do you feel each of the following really has in how your school is run? The principal and assistants, the teachers, the students, parents of students, you, the school board. How much influence do you think each of these different groups should have. Repeat the list.

These interviews with a random sample of the student body stratified by race and sex will give rich documentation of the approach of students from various backgrounds to decision-making and influence in the school. The stratified random selection process, coupled with the tightly structured nature of these interviews, will provide an opportunity for rigorous content analysis of student responses. At present, only about one-third of these interviews have been transcribed, so any interpretation of results

must be impressionistic. Contrasts between subgroups are illustrated by excerpts from two in-depth interviews. First, a White School-Oriented Female:

Interviewer: What's the worst thing about going to Metro?

Student: CTA (Chicago Transit Authority).

Interviewer: Is that the only thing you can think of?

Student: Yea.

Interviewer: If you were principal, how would you change that?

Student: I don't think Nate (the principal) has any way he can change that. He can't change the little old ladies or the little old bus drivers who won't let you on because you're not exactly at the school....

Interviewer: Didn't they have a meeting with the CTA recently?

Student: I don't know, they might have. I hope so. But I know the other day I got...that's right, Nan (White Youth Culture) has a committee going...should have gone to the meeting....

This response illustrates a number of characteristics of the School Oriented group of which she is a part. She has identified a problem about which many people from her group have complained to the teachers, yet she can't suggest a solution. She locates the source of her problem outside the school and doesn't blame anyone on the staff for not solving it. She is tuned to communications within the school and was aware of a meeting called by one of the White Youth Culture students to try to deal with the problem. However, she didn't bother to attend.

Some contrasting attitudes are apparent in this interview excerpt with a White School Alienated Male:

Interviewer: Do you think high school students should have any say about what happens in school?

Student: No, I think they should be doing all their own business, going on with their own business.

Interviewer: What kinds of things should they have a say in and what kinds of things shouldn't they have a say in?

Student: I don't really know.

Interviewer: I don't believe that.

Student: Well I haven't gone out of my way to get any opinion. In about the past two months, I couldn't care less if anybody had fallen through here. I don't really care how the school is run. Right now, I'm not really familiar of how things are run cause I haven't tried to keep up with it.... That's because every time I went to school meetings nobody ever tried to follow up. I tried a few times, but then I decided not to try and bother with it because what was one person going to do with all that stuff. And after that, I just said, "They're not worrying about Metro, I'm not going to worry about Metro." To me I think Metro is going to survive anyway. They want to fight about it, let them go fight about it.

3. Observations: The subsample students were observed both in and out of class. In addition, various formal and informal processes related to the major concerns of the research program were observed. Below are the notes of a participant observer concerning the first meeting of the administrative board, one of the three unsuccessful governing schemes that was attempted. These excerpts from his notes again indicate the type of information we have collected. They were also specifically selected to illuminate the differential reactions to student participation in governance by the various subgroups. Only excerpts are reproduced. The statements made in the meeting are on the right. The observer's notes, along with comments he added several weeks later, are on the left.

In attendance, at the meeting: seven white teachers two black teachers. One black teacher who has close contacts with the Black School Alienated group is in the room using the phone. Four consultants to the school. Five White Youth Culture Students (WYC) (only two are official representatives to the meeting). Two White School Oriented Students (WSO) (both are representatives). Four Black School Oriented Students (BSO) (all from the same like group). One Black School Alienated Student (BSA) (working in the same room; half in the meeting).

The black teacher on the telephone leaves after finishing calls. Later, one of the black teachers who attended encourages him to get involved, but he says he doesn't care for that type of activity. The BSA student stays for awhile, listens, and leaves to talk with one of the school secretaries in the next room.

One of the white teachers chairs the meeting.

Chrm: Suggests use of modified Roberts Rules to help get things done.

Based on past experience with rambling meetings.

All students groan except WSO boys.

Chrm: Asks about credentials of people at meeting.

Students are supposed to officially represent "like groups" of their friends.

WYC girl: I don't have a group, but I know friends who could sign up.

WYC boy: You can't do that. It has to be with people signing.

Chrm: Asks BSO girl who she represents.

BSO girl: (Indignantly): Me, myself, and I. That's who I represent.

Chrm does not follow this up.

WYC boy to Observer: This meeting is not representative.

Teacher: Only official people should vote. Anyone can talk.

The principal is not at the meeting, nor will he come to any. He is ambivalent about the board.

The WYC will be concerned throughout about the theoretical problem of the representativeness of the group. SO and SA students will act for themselves without worrying about representation. They will be upset when they personally are not there when something is decided.

Chrm: Asks for agenda items.

Evaluation, counseling groups, tokens for bus travel are suggested.

WYC boy: Can I address the chairman. I don't really represent anybody. The problems Nate (the principal) talked about are more pressing than tokens (theft of purses, vandalism).

More discussion about agenda.

Chrm: Are there any additions or subtractions.

Silence.

A little later.

BSO girl: Would student activities go under agenda? Metro promised us a gym program and we have no equipment or anything.

Chrm: That's what I meant when I asked for additions and subtractions to the agenda.

BSO girl: I'm sorry.

YC students have somewhere learned the nicities of procedure. They are quick to get their concerns into the meeting. BSO feels awkward and apologetic about bringing her concerns into consideration.

Later another BSO girl wants to talk. (Raises her hand).

Chrm: (under building pressure to get things done before people start to leave): No, I'm sorry. Only representatives now.

BSO girl: I am a representative.

Chrm: Who?

BSO girl: I'll tell you who. Lists names.

She does not represent these people in any formal way. She just generated the names on demand. They are her friends and probably would be glad for her to be their representative. She does not feel obligated later, however, to really involve them in the issues being discussed. No teacher challenged her list, although they were all aware of the informal nature of her representation.

Later. The discussion is on the time of the meeting.

BSO girl: The meeting would be 2:30 until what? What if people have to leave for something like cheerleading?

Teacher: I move 2:30 on Wednesday with the agenda known so people will know what they're missing.

Teacher: Seconded.

BSO girl: There should be a limit on the meetings. So stuff will get done. Not like usual.

Chrm: Is there any more discussion?

BSO girl: Yeah, I want. No, forget it. (to observer) I want to have it limited. How do I do it?

Observer: "Make an amendment." You have to make an amendment.

The girl was unfamiliar with the process of parliamentary procedure. It must seem alien to the ways she is used to dealing with issues. Yet the staff member leading faces a real dilemma since many complaints have been made in the past that meetings are too rambling and people leave because nothing is being accomplished.

The second set of observation protocols deals with a meeting requested by the principal with a group of students who would advise him on what the problems were within the school.

The principal had asked teachers to make sure that they have representatives from their counseling groups (similar to home rooms) at this meeting.

Some groups have other things planned and don't send representatives (For example, going to teacher's house for lunch, having sensitivity group training, watching a movie on race relations). Others mention the meeting but no students want to go.

One teacher to her group: Asks who wants to go. No one volunteers. She asks BSA if he'd do it and be sure to report next week on whatever goes on.

The meeting is supposed to start at about 12:30 (when counseling groups start). Two WYC are looking for it. Principal is still downstairs working. Finally, at 1:30 the meeting starts. People finally get together in a corner of the lounge.

Present at the meeting are two WYC girls, one BSO girl, and one BSA boy who are official representatives. Two WYC girls wandered by and became involved.

It is usually the YC who can spot a situation where something might be decided or discussed.

There are more SA students than other groups walking in this area. None of them stop however.

Principal: How do we deal with student body problems?

Discussion

Principal: Suggests maybe we have to get the staff together first.

WYC girl: Challenges principal. Says she doesn't understand why that's necessary.

Principal: What do you think about the headquarters?

WYC girl: Complains that she said a number of times it shouldn't be divided into so many rooms.

BSO girl: Says she didn't understand the drawings last year. Doesn't like the way it turned out.

WYC boy walks by, decides to stay, sits down and listens, later starts participating. Several SA students walk by but do not stop.

Principal: Would it be better to make the third floor into a lounge?

Students: Yeah. (All agree.)

Principal: Says he can't order that it happen. Has to come from students.

WYC girl: Where, from counseling groups? They're nothing.

WYC girl: Even if we went and talked about it in counseling groups, only half the kids would know because the rest are cutting.

WYC girl: Brings up problem of people not knowing what's going on. She adds: Counselors don't even know how much credit we need.

Discussion continues about counseling groups, communication, interdisciplinary core courses, student government, how open are staff meetings, how capable teachers think students are, role of sports in bringing kids together, need for a lunch room.

Significant points at meeting: Dominated by WYC kids. They felt quite comfortable bringing up issues and challenging the principal. The SO and SA students were generally not willing to do so. WYC kids came to meeting even when they were not official. One wandered by, stopped, sat down and began to participate. SA and SO students did not.

I followed up as much as I could about what happened to information presented at the meeting.

WYC girl to another later that day: Nate (Principal) is really concerned about the way the staff is divided. He says that's part of the reason counseling groups are not working. (Goes on to explain other issues.)

BSA boy later that day: Never actually focuses on meeting as a significant event in itself.

Uses knowledge gained at meeting as inside dope to be fit into conversations as appropriate.

A friend wonders what the construction is on the third floor. BSA boy replies it is storage space for a food service.

One week later in BSA's counseling group.

Teacher: What went on at the meeting?

BSA student: Nothing!

Teacher: Come on, now. You must have discussed more than that.

BSA boy: Yeah, they're going to close up the small lounges on the second and fourth floors and make the third floor a lounge.

Notice use of "they".

Teacher: What else?

Silence.

Two BSA students were joking in the corner and caught only part of it.

One BSA boy: Hey, did you hear that, they're going to close the lounge. Now what do they expect us to do. They kick us out of the halls and classes and now no lounge.

Observer: Explained to them that third floor would replace the smaller lounges.

4. Mini-interviews: Short structured interviews with random samples of students stratified by race and sex provide a further perspective on subgroup approaches to involvement in decision-making. Below are questions related to the topic of student involvement in decision-making that were asked at various stages in the program's development:

Spring, 1970

--Do you think students have much say in what goes on around here? What kinds of things? Have you tried to change anything? What happened?

--Do you sense any kinds of limits? Is there anything students couldn't do?

--If you were going to vote to keep counseling groups or get rid of them, how would you vote?

--Do you trust teachers like you trust students or are there things you're reluctant to talk about with them?

--What do you think about student government?

--What about all-school meetings? What do you think of those?

Fall, 1970

--How do you think Metro has changed since last year? Do you like it better or worse than last year?

--(Asked of new students) What kinds of things have you picked up from talking with old students or watching them?

--What do you think of the core course idea?

Spring, 1971

--How has Metro changed since the fall? Do you like it better or worse?

--If you were principal at Metro, what would you change?

Responses to such questions from a cross-section of students at a time when many were "hot issues" in the school provide another type of specific insight into subgroup variations. For example, here are some responses to the question, "If you were principal at Metro, what would you change? (Spring, 1971):

> White School Oriented Male: More classes should have books...Lockers. I would get the lockers we need...They should have a grade so you could find out how much you are learning, but I don't think we should go back to letter grades for report cards.

Black School Alienated Male: We don't have course books, no heat, and no lockers. And I don't like that wall downstairs. You have to walk all the way around to the restaurant. It's cold outside. And the food is sure high down there.

Black School Alienated Female: Counseling groups should be abolished because they're a waste of time.

Black School Oriented Female: The whole school. It wouldn't be different from other schools. No traveling. Like regular school, only new.

Black School Alienated Male: I'd put mostly freshman in because they'd be afraid to cut class. Since they've never been to high school, don't tell them their freedoms; just let them find out for themselves. Recreation tables in the lounge like pool. I'd put more security on the equipment.

White School Oriented Female: I'd change what everybody's trying to change --people's attitudes. More space. Open like this. No chairs, people just come and sit down. And a three-cycle year instead of four and make the periods smaller. 50 to 55 minute periods.

Black School Oriented Male: There's not very much to change.

White School Oriented Male: I'd change positions. I don't know if I could stand to be in the position Nate is in. I'd rather be a teacher.

White School Alienated Male: I'd put in a smoking lounge. And say that they don't have to go through all kinds of shit from the board. You have to have a card from your parents...I'd try to get lockers in. Try to get the board to work faster for Metro.

White Youth Culture Female: I would have two base locations. One out in the country and one in the city. More running around. I'd have all the teachers teach like (Names three teachers with close identification with hip kids). I'd have the teachers and student together in encounter sessions.... I'd get rid of the word "high school," unless everybody was high on something (smiles).

White School Alienated Male: The student would be more refined. I wouldn't just pick them out of nowhere. So that way the school would survive (it is apparent from other conversations with this student that he is talking about the Black School Alienated group)....I'd have a much bigger social program. First of all much more dances, parties. You talk about how racially divided it is, it's just because people are alienated. They could have picnics and things and get to know each other.

One sees in these responses many influences besides the student's subgroup identification, including individual personality, home influence, neighborhood influence, and specific experiences since entering Metro. One can also see, however, the characteristic attitudes of students from various subgroups that have been analyzed in Section II.

Document File: A file of approximately 4000 documents has been indexed by major topic, source, and date in light of the major areas of study in the research program. The document file provides still another perspective on the issues and events that are of interest and can be subjected to qualitative analysis along with participant observations and informal interviews. Here, for example, are two documents illustrating the mistrust of teachers' priorities that developed among those Black School Oriented and School Alienated students who attempted to develop traditional school activities at Metro. The first is a letter from a teacher to the rest of the staff; the writer is one of the teachers who works closely with the School Oriented and School Alienated black students and is often their advocate to the rest of the staff:

November 1, 1970

Dear Teachers:

You have been accused of being guilty of one of the most serious crimes on earth. It has been said that you lack school spirit. It has been said that you don't care if our potential number one football team has to play in faded blue-jeans and dirty t-shirts. It has been said that you don't care if our cheerleaders and majorettes have to perform in baggy gym-suits and run-over gym shoes.

Show students that you do have school spirit by donating every cent ($ $) you can spare to the athletic outfit fund. Be the leaders they want you to be.

Please?? Donations being received Friday and next Monday.

Thank you,

Mary

The second document is an article by a member of the Black School Alienated group concerning the need for a football team:

Something to Think About

Why doesn't Metro have a football team? According to Tom Brown (teacher), the reason is "No money. There's not enough money to buy uniforms, equipment, or to hire an assistant coach to help me." ....

Will Metro ever get into the city football league? I, for one, don't think so, and I know why. Yes, I know Tom said no money but that is not the real reason. If Metro has money for space, it can find money for a team. All I ask is for you, (principal), for you, Tom Brown, for you, (Assistant Principal), and you, (Program Coordinator), to try to get Metro a real football team in '72!

October 1971

IV. Uses of the Metro Research in Strengthening Alternative Schools

Complete analysis of Metro research data in the fifteen major areas of interest indicated in the Introduction (including student involvement in institutional decision-making) could serve as the basis for producing several types of information and materials that will be extremely valuable to other alternative schools:

1. A clarification of the issues and problems entailed in each of the areas of concern (student involvement in institutional decision-making, effective use of community resources, successful approaches in the classroom, etc.). The preceding two chapters provide and example of the richness and specificity of the information available for this analysis.

2. Specification of several models for the development of an alternative school in the key areas studied in the Metro research program.

3. Detailed staff and student development materials based on Metro interviews and observations that will assist alternative schools in implementing specific programs in these areas.

4. Suggestions for formative and summative evaluation based on those research techniques that have paid off at Metro. A detailed analysis of which techniques can best be employed in an evaluation conducted in an alternative school, and how much each approach costs.

It should be emphasized again that material contained in the present report is only a small indication of the scope of the analysis we are seeking to complete.

The result of the completed research can be "disseminated" in a number of ways, but an examination of past attempts to incorporate new ideas into planned or existing programs suggests that the products of the Metro research can be used most effectively as part of a program of direct technical assistance to developing schools. In some instances, schools might wish to adopt and try out a specific model or approach that is suggested by the Metro research (e.g., a system of communication or a

structure for student involvement in decision-making); a staff and student development program to implement this approach could then be carried out. In other instances, a school might be pursuing a distinctive approach to a problem that could be strengthened by consideration of issues raised by the Metro research and resulting case study materials. In still other instances, a school might be employing a philosophy and approach that has consistently failed in alternative schools. Consideration of the Metro material (especially specific case studies of people or events) might cause them to alter their approach or at least develop some feedback procedures that will alert them if expected problems start to occur.

Some Useful Implications of the Metro Data: An Example from the Area of Student Involvement in Decision-Making: Originally, we intended to include in this section a comprehensive treatment of the implications of the research on student involvement in decision-making presented in Section II, and a presentation of alternative models for student involvement based on these research conclusions. This project proved much too ambitious at this point. Therefore, the six comments below can be regarded as fragmentary comments on the implications of our preliminary results. They should give some further indication of the potential usefulness of our data and provide those involved in alternative schools a few ideas to discuss in the area of student involvement:

1. Although no attempt has been made in this report to relate our preliminary findings at Metro to information we have obtained from other alternative schools, this information seems to indicate that the events and underlying dynamics of Metro's attempt to involve students in institutional decision-making are quite similar to

what has happened elsewhere. This conclusion runs counter to accepted alternative school ideology, which holds that each situation is unique and each school must struggle alone with its individual problems. The existence of similar approaches and similar resulting problems in many different situations suggests the possibility that subsequent innovations might learn to avoid some of these mistakes.

2. One might assert, after reviewing our preliminary results and similar experiences elsewhere, that the importance of involving students in institutional decision-making has been greatly overrated and that as long as the staff members use their authority wisely, there is little need for schemes to involve students. We disagree for two reasons. First, the Metro experience suggests that even an extremely sensitive staff cannot, in the long run, take student desires into account adequately without some organized voice for students in decision-making. As the Metro data indicates, staff priorities for decision-making differed in important respects from those of students, especially those students from the School Oriented and School Alienated groups. Students from all subgroups at Metro were dissatisfied in a number of respects, but initially lacked either the skills, attitudes, or stamina to work through the decision-making mechanism that evolved. The positive effect of staff's willingness to talk with students began to wear off as the problems that students advanced informally weren't dealt with to their satisfaction. Student involvement through the "complaint mode" also made students intolerant of difficulties encountered in solving problems. The evidence suggests to us that a voice for students in decision-making must still be considered an important characteristic of an effective alternative secondary school, although the concept of what an effective mechan-

ism for student involvement might look like must be substantially altered.

A second objection might be raised concerning the desirability of a school operated by a beneficient staff. Such an approach would reinforce the passive orientation toward political participation into which students have already been socialized and would prepare them poorly for dealing with traditional institutions after they graduate. Such results of schooling would seem inconsistent with the goals of any school that seeks to develop skills and attitudes for active political participation among its students. Metro staff initially regarded participation in decision-making as a right to be conferred on students and were discouraged when students didn't begin to exercise that right. In employing this approach, staff underestimated the force of the students' past socialization. The Metro experience suggests that participation in decision-making might be better regarded as a skill to be developed rather than a right to be granted.

3. Program initiators should establish an initial structure for governance that will reconcile the goals of institutional survival and development with the goal of involvement in decision-making rather than hoping one will "emerge". If such a structure achieves these potentially conflicting goals, it will be regarded as legitimate by program participants, even though it might not be the structure that would be suggested spontaneously by the school community. To hope that structure will "emerge" from the community might be slightly simpler initially. However, since the types of structure that are almost always proposed have a history of failing, the long-range effect will almost certainly be alienation, exhaustion, and the drastic curtailment of participation when ineffective methods of decision-making promote crisis.

4. The nature of the decision-making structure should be communicated clearly to program participants initially, perhaps with the provision that it can be modified after six months or a year if people are dissatisfied with it. For example, here is the skeleton of a possible governance structure:

a. A central representative decision-making body composed of staff and students. (Community Council)

b. Standing committees dealing with predictable institutional functions. These committees would encourage student involvement at three levels:

(1) Permanent members of a committee.

(2) Temporary members who are involved to perform a specific task.

(3) A randomly selected panel of students who are consulted about key issues in the work of the committee.

c. Temporary committees appointed by the Community Council.

d. Facilitators who promote the involvement of specific student subgroups in decision-making.

We think this model has considerable merit (it needs of course to be spelled out in much greater detail), but we are offering it only as an example of the general approach we're suggesting: i.e. the clarification of a specific framework for decision-making from the start. Clear safe-guards can be built into the functioning of the government to guard against centralization of power. The Metro experience illustrates clearly that fluidity of structure does not guarantee decentralization of power; rather it places power in the hands of those staff members and students who have the skills and motivation required to keep track of a constantly-shifting organization, while the large majority of students lose track of how decisions are made.

5. The Metro research suggests four levels of participation in decision-making among students along an informal-formal dimension:

a. Informal discussion and complaining within one's subgroup.

b. Informal discussion and complaining to teachers.

c. Limited involvement in specific activities of the government structure.

d. On-going involvement in the activities of the government structure.

A reasonable goal for the development of student involvement in decision-making might be that all students in the course of their education became able to operate at level (c) and a substantial number at level (d). At the same time, steps should be taken to insure that input at all levels has some influence on the governance of the school. Here are the steps that might be taken at each level:

Levels (a) & (b) Each subgroup should have representatives who are involved in the formal governance process so that concerns shared informally within the subgroup are advocated within the formal structure. Some staff members should be designated as "facilitaters" for student involvement. A facilitator should be chosen because of his ability to communicate with a particular subgroup. He should work with leaders within the subgroup to involve them in formal decision-making, he should be aware of the concerns of the subgroup and when appropriate become their advocate in the formal decision-making process, and he should constantly seek to turn informal complaints into student action within the formal structure.

A second way in which level (b) involvement can be improved is for committees within the school to select a random subsample of students for regular interviewing on specific aspects of their work. Committee members could be assigned the job of interviewing students in the subsample individually or the subsample could be brought together for a group meeting. Through this mechanism, high levels of involvement could be encouraged.

Level (c) Students should be provided with an opportunity for limited involvement on specific issues that they are particularly concerned about. Examples of this type of involvement would include work on temporary committees, involvement in a specific project for permanent committees, a mechanism for presenting concerns to the Community Council.

Level (d) Perhaps it is unrealistic to think that everyone could be involved at level (d) through a community council or its committees. On the other hand, one might choose to make it a requirement for admission that a person agree to some participation at this level.

Whatever position one takes on the necessity of total participation, other important characteristics at this level seem clear: there should be participants from all subgroups within the school at this level, a long enough period of tenure in office to facilitate effective problem-solving, and a rule that limits the amount of time one can remain in a leadership position in the Community Council or committee system to guard against over centralization.

4. Effective mechanisms for communication about governance must be incorporated into the school from the start. Some concrete ways of fostering communication might include the following: individual mailboxes for all staff and students; a technical assistance group who would teach people to design and produce effective posters, notices, etc.; a daily newsletter that would contain any announcement or brief statement that any member of the community wished to make; resources for communication (typewriters, ditto supplies, etc.) set aside for students; a complete list of staff and student phone numbers available on the first day of operation. A key communication role could be played by the "facilitators" suggested above who are in contact with various subgroups in the school. Additional methods must be invented to communicate with the School Alienated subgroup within the school.

7. Research on Metro indicates clearly that certain skills and attitudes must be consciously developed among both students and staff for a governance structure to work. Assuming that no such skills and attitudes are necessary merely masks the unequal distribution of these attributes in the school community and helps insure unequal participation in decision-making.

The research on Metro reviewed earlier suggests several areas in which a training program for staff and students should be carried out. The nature of the Metro data can provide the basis for developing realistic case studies and exercises to deal with such issues as the following:

a. General procedures for effective decision-making and decision-implementation.

b. Staff actions that undercut students' roles in decision-making.

c. Successful involvement of students from School Oriented and School Alienated subgroups.

d. Development of student skills beyond the complaining stage.